



People-Sentinel
Barnwell, SC
Circ. 6702
From Page:
2
4/7/2010
66057



Page 2A - THE PA

218 Allendale 14 shows signs 13 of recovery

TIM HICKS

The People-Sentinel
tim.hicks@morris.com

It was more than the ground-breaking of a new business for the SRP Federal Credit Union in Allendale April 2; it was a sign of hope.

Allendale County has been leading the state in unemployment rates for several months.

In January, Allendale County had an unemployment rate of 24.1 percent, the highest of the 46 counties.

In July 2009, its rate was 22.4 percent; in August, 21.8 percent; in November, 23 percent — all numbers that put the county at the top of the joblessness chart, according to data from the S.C. Employment Security Commission.

The state unemployment rate was 12.5 percent in January and February 2010.

However, the county is showing signs of economic improvement.

In February, Allendale dropped to second place in the unemployment figures with 22.4 percent. Marion County has the leading unemployment rates in the state at 22.7 percent, the latest figures available from the S.C. Employment Security Commission.

The SRP office ground-breaking in Allendale was a welcomed event.

The event brought out members from the Allendale County Council and Town Council, SRP officers and U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson.

The two halves of the prefabricated 72-by-28-foot office building are already on site and will be positioned and set into place before the office opens.

SRP's only presence for the last two years in Allendale has been an automated teller machine facing Flatt Street (U.S. 301) in downtown Allendale. The office will be located behind the ATM.

County:

Barnwell

66057-04-07_2001



→

People-Sentinel
Barnwell, SC
Circ. 6702
From Page:
2
4/7/2010
66057



"We are looking for acquisition of the entire lot," said Steve Wilson, the vice president of SRP's eastern division. "This is intended to be a temporary office. By temporary, I mean for years."

"We already have a sizeable percentage of the population (of the town of Allendale) as members," he said.

The Allendale SRP office will employ a member services representative, two tellers and its branch manager, Brookey Taylor.

However, SRP will be rotating new employees through the Allendale office as a training site, said Ed Templeton, the SRP president and chief financial officer.

"This facility will be an incubator to move them to other branches. By using it as an incubator, they will grow and mature to other areas," he said. "It's the first time we have had the opportunity to do this. If it works, this is the place to do it. We are fully prepared to train people."

"I know people focus on the economic numbers, but there are great things going on here people don't see. One thing you won't find here is a lack of confidence," said Dewayne Ennis, the Allendale town administrator.

Other plans in the works for Allendale include moving the Piggly Wiggly grocery store to a better site on Platt Street and a new town hall, Ennis said.

The county is also partnering with Denmark Technical College on a \$2.4 million project to convert an old building into a combination library and job training center.

Also the county just finished a \$1.5 million facility housing the local offices for the S.C. Department of Social Services and S.C. Department of Health and Human Services, he said.

The county has also received a \$100,000 grant to create a four-mile trail along an old U.S. 301 roadbed that will start at the old welcome center on U.S. 301, Bennett said.

The old welcome center is at the heart of another grant for \$99,000 to convert it into an environmental education facility, he said.